

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee

2/23/2017

Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and Department of Public Health (DPH) and Department of Developmental Services (DDS) budget cuts and

Governor's H.B. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFORE

Good afternoon Senators Osten and Formica, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Michael Scanlon and I am a registered voter in East Hampton. I am here to testify in opposition to the proposed budget cuts for The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS.) DMHAS is not just an agency and a line item – DMHAS represents hope, and a promise that Connecticut has a comprehensive system for equitable health care for all.

I write this testimony as a young adult who would not be living independently and a contributing member of society if community based supports were not readily available. At four years old, I suffered a traumatic brain injury from a fall. Because of that injury, I do live with mental health challenges.

Yet because I had the support of a loving family and access to integrated behavioral health care, I was able to overcome my challenges and live a full, rich life. With the currently recommended cuts, I fear many residents will be denied a chance at recovery and healing.

Specifically, cuts to Young Adult Services (YAS) will eliminate the expansion of investing in youth-driven initiatives and necessary program expansions. YAS has the unique task of providing support to a most vulnerable population of young adults, many who need intensive supports and have multiple unmet needs.

In addition, cuts to the Regional Mental Health Boards (RMHB) will result in the loss of major federal funding for the state. On average, the five RMHB bring in \$23 million dollars for the state through grants. In addition, RMHB provide training and help to optimize state prevention efforts. With only an operating cost of 1.2 million dollars, clearly the ROI for the RMHB is an astounding deal.

Furthermore, Connecticut Legal Rights Project (CLRP) protects and advocates for the states most vulnerable population. The cuts to CLRP would eliminate housing advocacy, a vital service that aligns with the Housing First Model, a proven model that addresses homelessness and integrated care. It

would also strain the caseload of an already overworked and underfunded agency that would get even worse as the projected volumes increases with each behavioral health line item cut.

I understand you all have immense pressure as we work through a time of fiscal crisis. Preserving funding for DMHAS would ensure that CT maintains its status as a forward thinking state that places people first.

Thank you.